



## Grapes Across Texas

By Robin Barr Sussman

Deep in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, scenic back roads gently snake through rolling green hills brightened with bluebonnets and other wildflowers. Fitted with lakes, natural falls, and limestone cliffs, this area is one of the most beautiful landscapes in the state. For thousands of years, rich Texas soil nurtured wild grapes along rivers and streams. Today, witness vast vineyards and more than 100 wineries dotting Texas, making it the fourth largest wine producing state in the U.S.

Most Texans don't realize that our tradition of winemaking predates California's. In the 17th century, the Spanish missionaries produced the first wine in El Paso (now Texas) using their native Mission grape. Of the 36 species of *vitis vinifera* in the world, 15 are native to Texas.

Unfortunately, prohibition put a stop to alcohol production in Texas, a region that would have flourished on its own. Today, Texas wine is enjoying resurgence in quality, reputation, and popularity. Budding entrepreneurs are opening new wineries and enthusiastic consumers are inspired to drink wine made in their own back yard. Since 1985, Texas wines have received thousands of awards at state, national and international competitions. Texas wine has even received the honor of being served repeatedly at The White House.

Of course, humidity, extreme heat, draught and floods, not to mention the pesky Pierce's disease, still challenge Texas winemakers. But they stopped trying to mimic California, and started fierce efforts to grow specific grapes in appropriate regions that actually work with the state's climate and soil.

A few of those grapes include the somewhat delicate yet thriving Viognier, Chenin Blanc, Riesling, and Sauvignon Blanc varieties. For bold reds, Texas grows best: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Zinfandel, Sangiovese and Tempranillo. When you are ready

**Below find a few of our favorite tasting rooms to kick off your adventure.**

**Alamosa Wine Cellars,**  
Bend, 325.628.3313

**Becker Vineyards,**  
Stonewall, 830.644.2681

**Driftwood Vineyards,**  
Driftwood,  
512.858.4508

**Fall Creek Vineyards,**  
Tow, 325.379.5361

**Flat Creek Estates,**  
Marble Falls,  
512.267.6319

**Mandola Estate Winery,** Driftwood,  
512.858.1470

**Messina Hof,** Bryan,  
979.778.9463

to sample, the Texas wine trail reaches far and wide with several areas worth mapping out for a long weekend. A good starting point would be Austin or Fredericksburg. This epicenter of the wine country is dotted with well-known wineries open to the public. There are more wineries and vineyards to the north of the Hill Country from Fort Worth to Fort Stockton, Lubbock, and the Dallas area.